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Illinois Film Office Announces Shortcuts: Illinois' First Short Film Contest

Winning entry receives cash prize, premier at the 2008 Chicago International Film Festival

CHICAGO – The Illinois Film Office today announced its first ever statewide short film contest. The contest, named Shortcuts, is designed to encourage filmmakers across the state to explore their creativity and showcase their skills. Shortcuts is open to all Illinois residents over the age of 18 and students over the age of 18 who attend Illinois colleges and universities. The winning entry will receive a cash prize and the winning film will screen during the Chicago International Film Festival.

Participants may use any format – film, video, graphics and/or animation – to tell a narrative story, a documentary or free form visual expression of ideas. Submissions must be 15 minutes or less in running time. Entries will be judged by a panel of film industry professionals. Submissions must be postmarked by August 30, 2008. Additional contest rules and details can be found at www.illinoisfilm.biz.

"Illinois is home to some of the best film schools and filmmakers in the country. The Illinois Short Film contest, Shortcuts, continues to build our great talent base by allowing filmmakers of all levels of experience and expertise to showcase their creativity and receive widespread recognition for their work," Illinois Film Office Managing Director Betsy Steinberg said.

"We are always looking for innovative ways to showcase and promote Illinois' film industry. The film industry brings thousands of jobs to the state each year, and millions in revenue," Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Director Jack Lavin said. "The Shortcuts contest is another way that we're fostering film production in the state."

The film industry has a sizable impact on the Illinois economy and brings thousands of jobs to the state each year. In 2007, Illinois film productions made more than 26,500 hires in Illinois – a 110 percent increase over 2006. A number of films and television shows were produced in Illinois in 2007 including: "The Dark Knight" (Batman); "Wanted," starring Angelina Jolie and Morgan Freeman; "Fred Claus," with Vince Vaughn; "Meet the Browns," starring Angela Bassett; "ER" (TV show), and "My Boys" (TV show). This year, movies such as "Public Enemies"

starring Johnnie Depp and “The Informant” starring Matt Damon have filmed in Illinois.

In 2000, Illinois began suffering a mass exodus of the film industry as other states began enacting film incentives. By 2003, the Illinois film industry had fallen to an all-time low of \$23 million. In response, Gov. Blagojevich enacted the Illinois Film Tax Credit. Since its passage, the film industry has rebounded dramatically. The film industry reached an all-time record of nearly \$155 million in 2007. This represents the single best year in the state's history – and an 80 percent increase over 2006.

The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity is dedicated to advancing Illinois' reputation as a world-class film destination. The Illinois Film Office, a division of DCEO, promotes and markets the state as an ideal shooting location for films, television shows and commercials. The IFO also promotes and encourages the training and hiring of Illinois residents who represent the diversity of the state's population.

Gov. Blagojevich's Opportunity Returns regional economic development strategy is the most aggressive, comprehensive approach to creating jobs in Illinois' history. Since a one-size-fits-all approach to economic development just doesn't work, the Governor has divided the state into 10 regions – each with a regional team that is empowered and expected to rapidly respond to opportunities and challenges. Opportunity Returns is about tangible, specific actions to make each region more accessible, more marketable, more entrepreneurial and more attractive to businesses. It is about upgrading the skills of the local workforce, increasing the access to capital, opening new markets, improving infrastructure, and creating and retaining jobs. Opportunity Returns is about successfully partnering with companies and communities, both large and small, to help all of Illinois reach its economic potential.